

FOOTNOTES 2006

NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR WINTER 2006

Indoor Sports are Hard on Feet

In the winter months many recreational athletic activities move indoors. Indoor facilities are available for many sports such as tennis, soccer, basketball and volleyball. Even runners can keep in shape using the track at the local health club. The hard surfaces found indoors can cause quite a pounding for your feet and ankles. Some of the injuries most commonly affecting indoor sports participants include:

Stress fractures. The most frequent site for stress fractures is the metatarsal bone. However, they can occur in any one of the 28 bones in the foot, and if not properly diagnosed and treated, can lead to long-term consequences. Persistent pain in the foot is a warning sign that something is wrong.

Heel pain. The heel is another common injury site. Pain may be due to plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the band of tissue that extends from the heel bone to the base of the toes. However, pain in this area may be due to other conditions, including stress fractures and tendon problems.

Achilles tendon injury. The longest tendon in the human body, the Achilles runs down the back of the lower leg and connects the calf muscle to the heel bone. Overuse of the tendon, when too much stress is placed on the tendon too quickly or when it is over stretched, leads to micro-injury of the tendon fibers or rupture of the tendon.

Prevention

Conditioning and common sense go a long way toward preventing serious injuries.

Always warm up. Before beginning an activity, get the blood flowing into those muscles and tendons by walking around the court a few times or spending 10 minutes on an exercise bike.

Gently stretch. Hold the stretch for 30 to 60 seconds; you should have to do each stretch only once, and never stretch to the point of pain.

Use proper footgear. Use the appropriate shoe for your activity and foot type, and replace shoes frequently. Proper support of arches is critical.

If you do experience pain, discontinue the activity. If, after a couple of days of rest, pain persists, make an appointment with our office for an evaluation. Don't let a foot or ankle injury keep you on the sidelines this winter! ☹



Children's Feet Need Special Attention

If your child is playing an indoor sport this season, watch for signs of injuries to the growth plate of the heel. In children, the heel bone is not yet fully developed until age 14 or older. Until then, new bone is forming at the growth plate, a weak area located at the back of the heel. Too much stress on the growth plate is the most common cause of pediatric heel pain. If pain in this area occurs, the child should stop playing until he or she can be properly evaluated and diagnosed. ☹

Protect Your Ankles From Winter Falls

Rain, snow, sleet, ice... or a combination of them... often greet us as we walk out the door in the winter months. That's one reason why this is prime season for ankle injuries.

A bit of caution can help prevent ankle sprains and fractures from ruining your plans for enjoying the winter months:

Choose the right shoes. High heels are a recipe for disaster on slippery surfaces. Shoes or boots with traction soles provide a more secure footing. Carry the high heels with you, and change into them when you arrive safely at your destination if you need to dress up.

Take care when exiting your car. Watch what you're about to step on as you get out of your car. If the surface is slippery, move the car to a different spot or hold on firmly to the door frame as you stand up. And keep your hands free to support you... don't try getting out of the car with your hands full of packages.



Use outdoor lighting. Doorways, porches, stairs and sidewalks outside of your house should be well-lighted so that you, your family and guests can easily see where slippery spots may be hiding.

What if You Do Injure Your Ankle?

Immediate attention is required for any ankle injury to prevent further damage to the ankle joint and avoid chronic ankle problems. Both sprains and fractures of this complex joint are serious injuries that should be evaluated as soon as possible. Until you're able to get into our office for an evaluation, follow the "R.I.C.E." principle:

- **Rest.** It is crucial to stay off the injured foot, since walking can cause further damage.
- **Ice.** To reduce swelling and pain, apply a bag of ice over a thin towel to the affected area for 20 minutes of each waking hour. Do not put ice directly against the skin.
- **Compression.** Wrap the ankle in an elastic bandage or wear a compression stocking to prevent further swelling.
- **Elevation.** Keep the foot elevated to reduce the swelling. It should be even with or slightly above the hip level. 🦶